DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 302 865 CS 506 516

AUTHOR Costanza, Jean M.
TITLE Pope John Paul II's Address to Black Catholics: A Motive Analysis.
PUB DATE May 89
NOTE 18p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the Eastern Communication Association (Ocean City, MD, May 4-7, 1989).
PUB TYPE Speeches/Conference Papers (150) -- Reports - Research/Technical (143)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Audience Awareness; Audience Response; *Black Community; *Catholics; Discourse Analysis; Identification; Intercultural Communication; *Persuasive Discourse; Racial Bias; *Rhetorical Criticism
IDENTIFIERS Catholic Church; Differentiation; John Paul II (Pope); *Rhetorical Strategies

ABSTRACT

Pope John Paul's visit to the United States in 1987 provided many opportunities for the analysis of papal rhetoric. The Pope's address to black Catholics in America may be of particular interest to those focusing on the study of intercultural or interracial communication. This address did not garner as much media attention as did some of the Pope's other meetings, perhaps because this meeting was supportive rather than adversarial. It did, however, provide an important opportunity for rhetorical analysis. Walter R. Fisher's "Motives of Communication" proved to be a useful guide in analyzing the Pope's speech when he was forced to address two conflicting images of the Catholic Church in the minds of his black audience. One image held by his audience was of the Church as a racist institution, the other as a source of spiritual fulfillment and redemption. By exploring the specific ways the Pope tried to accomplish his objectives and the effectiveness of his rhetoric this approach should offer critics a way of evaluating rhetoric that attends to motives previously thought to be completely incompatible. A rhetorical analysis of the Pope's address provides insight into the strategies employed in simultaneously reaffirming a positive image and purifying a negative image. The concepts of identification and differentiation were found to be important to the purification motive and a theme of salvation and uplift established through language was found to be crucial to the reaffirmation motive. (Forty-four notes are included.) (MS)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

ED302865

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

Jean Costanza

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

☐ This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.

☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.

• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

Pope John Paul II's Address to Black Catholics:

A Motive Analysis

Jean M. Costanza
1146 Tawes Fine Arts
University of Maryland
College Park, MD 20742

DEBUT

CS506516

ABSTRACT

Pope John Paul's visit to the United States in 1987 provided many opportunities for the analysis of papal rhetoric. The Pope's address to black Catholics in America may be of particular interest to those focusing on the study of intercultural or interracial communication. This address did not garner as much media attention as did some of the Pope's other meetings, perhaps because this meeting was supportive rather than adversariel. It did, however, provide an important opportunity for rhetorical analysis.

Fisher's motives proved to be a useful guide in analyzing the Pope's speech as he was forced to address two conflicting images of the Catholic Church in the minds of his black audience. One image held by his audience was of the Church as a racist institution, the other as a source of spiritual fulfillment and redemption. This study provides insight into the strategies employed in simultaneously reaffirming a positive image and purifying a negative image. The concepts of identification and differentiation were found to be important to the purification motive and a theme of salvation and upliftment established through language was found to be crucial to the reaffirmation motive.

It is hoped that this analysis provides the impetus for future study from a perspective broad enough to consider the possibility of achieving not only multiple, but seemingly contradictory motives in a single rhetorical act.

The influence of papal rhetoric has long been a cornerstone of the Catholic Church.[1] The extensive media coverage of Pope John Paul II's 1987 visit to the United States is evidence of the current prominence of the Pope as a world leader. As reported in Newsweek, "Armed with nothing more potent than the symbolism of his unique office--and the moral authority that goes with it--he has become a key figure in the quest for world peace."[2] In the ten days and nine cities of his U.S. pilgrimage, John Paul appeared in parades, offered masses to throngs of worshipers, and met with groups of priests, President Reagan, Jewish leaders, Protestant leaders, Catholic educators, Hispanic Americans, communications professionals, health care workers, and an often overlooked group, black Catholics. In many places the Pope encountered protesters, especially in San Francisco, where gay rights groups marched in opposition to the Church's doctrine. In many meetings, issues of American Catholic dissent such as priestly celibacy and the role of women were brought up and unequivocally dismissed by the Pontiff.[3]

One meeting, however, stood out because these issues of dissent were never raised. As reported in the Christian Science Monitor, "In New Orleans, the Pope used some of his strongest language and got what may have been his warmest and most enthusiastic reception, from black Catholics."[4] The strong language was encouragement for black Catholics, not the subtle scolding that many other groups received during the Pontiff's visit. The Washington Post referred to the event as "a historic

meeting."[5] Not only was the meeting historic, as the first meeting of the Pope with members of the Black Catholic community, but analysis of the papal address at the gathering also provides the opportunity for discovering how seemingly incongruous motives may be accomplished through a single act of rhetorical discourse.

To appropriately analyze the Pope's address, the general feelings of black Catholics about their involvement with the Catholic Church must be established. After discovering the concerns and hopes of the audience, it will be possible to determine what the Pope hoped to accomplish in his address considering the motives involved in rhetorical situations outlined by Fisher.[6] By exploring the specific ways the Pope tried to accomplish his motives and the effectiveness of his rhetoric, this approach should offer critics a way of evaluating rhetoric that attends to motives previously thought to be completely incompatible.

There were fewer than 200,000 "colored Catholics" in 1912, but the number is now close to 1.3 million after having risen 41 percent in the last 10 years.[7] Conversions and immigration are thought to be the primary contributors to this dramatic increase.[8] The large number of conversions is not surprising considering the emphasis black bishops have recently placed on evangelization in the black community. In 1984 the black bishops of the United States issued a pastoral letter on evangelization entitled 'What We Have Seen and Heard'.[9] One year later, a black Catholic symposium was held at Harlem's St. Charles Borromeo Church to mark

the anniversary of the letter, chart the progress of evangelization efforts, and bring attention to the cause.[10] The National Black Catholic Congress held May 21-24, 1987, focused solely on the development of a specific plan for evangelization of blacks. Two of the top priorities set by the delegates were the "evangelization by blacks of the country's 6 million to 10 million black Americans who have no formal church affiliation" and developing worship styles which allow blacks to show pride in both their ethnicity and their Catholicism.[11] The pride many blacks feel as Catholics and their desire to bring other blacks into the Church seems to indicate a general feeling of commitment to and satisfaction with the Catholic Church as a source of spiritual fulfillment.

The feelings of blacks toward the Church, however, are not always positive. In 'What We Have Seen and Heard' the black bishops acknowledged the existence of racism in the Church.[12] A recent survey of black Catholics in 65 cities showed that 89 percent feel that racism exists at the parish, school, diocesan, and archdiocesan levels. Slightly more than 70 percent feel that young black Catholics do not feel that they are a part of the Church and are therefore being lost to other denominations.[13]

Thus, the feelings of black Catholics toward the Church appear to be mixed. On the one hand, the Church is racist and does not encourage blacks to participate fully. On the other hand, the Catholic Church is to black Catholics what it is to all Catholics, a source of positive feelings of faith, community, and spiritual fulfillment. It is as if black Catholics maintain two distinct

images of the Church. One image is that of a redemptive Church, the other of a racist one. These two images held by black Catholics were expressed to the Pope in the pastoral letter on evangelization and in the address by Bishop Joseph Howze, a black bishop of Biloxi, Mississippi, which preceded the Pope's address at the historic meeting in New Orleans.[14]

Fisher discusses rhetorical discourse with the assumption that it "functions to affect the life of an image."[15] Clearly, John Paul had to attempt to affect the confusing image of the Church, and therefore of himself as the embodiment of it, held by the black Catholic community, his immediate and primary audience. His secondary audience consisted of those to be reached through media coverage of the address, those whose image of race relations within the Catholic Church would be influenced. Fisher notes that a conception of the audience affects the motives of a rhetor.[16]

The four rhetorical motives outlined by Fisher are affirmation, which introduces a new image; reaffirmation, which attempts to bring new life or vigor to an image; purification, which attempts to correct or refine an image; and subversion, which attempts to damage or destroy an image.[17] Because black Catholics appeared to hold two images of the Church, one image of redemption and one of racism, the Pope had two motives which determined the characteristics of his discourse. One motive was surely to purify the image of the Church as a racist institution. The second motive was to reaffirm the positive view black Catholics maintained of the Church as a source of redemption and salvation. Viewing the

discourse as a response to more than one image allows for critical insight into the existence and accomplishment of multiple, and seemingly conflicting, motives by a rhetor.

The strategy of a rhetoric of purification is often to identify the entity with the tarnished image, in this case the Church John Paul represents, with ideas or images that are valued by the audience. The Pope uses the identification strategy by clearly identifying himself with his immediate audience. He begins this strategy almost immediately by paraphrasing the biblical verse from which the black bishops had previously extracted the title of their pastoral letter. John Paul said, "The apostles first responded to the Savior's call and traveled throughout the known world, sharing with everyone who would listen **what they had seen and heard**" (cf. 1 John 1:3) (emphasis added).[18] In this passage, the Pope not only identifies with his audience by speaking of this particular passage, but also identifies himself with the apostles as he is now the traveler responding to the Savior's call.

The Pontiff follows his initial references to the Gospel by clearly establishing himself as a leader united with the black community saying, "I willingly join my voice to those of the bishops of your country" in calling for evangelization in the black community.[19] He follows this expression of unity with the entire black Catholic population of the United States by specifically addressing the black bishops with, "My dear brother bishops, who share with me the burdens and joys of the episcopacy...."[20] He later proclaims, "As bishops, we are entrusted with the task of

preserving in its integrity the good news of salvation and of presenting it as effectively as possible to our people...."[21] In these passages, John Paul not only identifies himself as a "brother bishop," but also as sharing the feelings of "burdens and joys' and the same tasks and functions as the black bishops, thereby strengthening the identification.

Later in the address, the Pontiff again directs his remarks to the broader community of all black Catholics with the assertion, "I am sure that you share with me a special concern for that most basic human community, the family."[22] Once more, he went beyond a simple identification as fellow Catholics to a deeper form of identification, that of sharing the same feelings and concerns. As the remainder of the speech focuses on the black community as a whole, John Paul maintains the identification theme by twice referring to members of the black community as his "dear brothers and sisters."[23]

In a rhetoric of purification, the identification strategy may also take a course whereby the rhetor not only identifies with that which is valued by the audience, but also attempts to be differentiated from that which the audience views negatively. John Paul uses the differentiation strategy extensively, principally by juxtaposing the racism of American society with the universality of the Catholic Church.

In his remarks directed specifically to the black bishops, the Pope states that he is "pleased that the universality of the Gospel and the cultural diversity of your nation are increasingly

mirrored in the composition of the American hierarchy."[24] He proceeds to explain that, "The church in the United States is distinguished by its large number of deacons, among whom are several hundred form the black Catholic community."[25] There are approximately 250 permanent deacons and 300 priests who are black in the United States, but only 11 bishops and no cardinals.[26] In the past, black Catholics have expressed concern over the dearth of blacks in leadership positions in the Church hierarchy.[27] By pointing out that the Church leadership reflects the diversity of the country and by mentioning the number of black deacons without putting the number into context by comparing it with the total number of deacons, John Paul differentiates the Catholic Church from American society where governmental and private business hierarchies do not reflect the cultural or ethnic diversity of the country.

The Pope continues the differentiation strategy by comparing the oppression of slavery to the evils of contemporary society and juxtaposing these evils with the goodness of religious life. He says, "Black religious today offer a comparable witness to the church and society, proclaiming God's kingdom to a world shackled by consumerism, mindless pleasure seeking and irresponsible individualism--shackles of the spirit which are even more destructive than the chains of physical slavery."[28] The contrast is clear: the Church is good and society is bad. The Pontiff maintains the contrast by declaring the vitality of the black Catholic community "is a sign of hope for society,"[29] a society that

he has established to be in need of hope. The role of the Church in the betterment of society is clarified when he says, "...you reflect the church's ability to bring together a diversity of people united in faith, hope and love...."[30] In this passage, the Pope establishes that the Church has a special ability that society lacks.

The contrast between the Church and society becomes even stronger as the speech progresses. In his passage regarding the value of the family, John Paul vividly defines the family as the most fundamental source for developing love and faith in religion. He defines the role of the Church as "to defend their (families) rights and to teach the obligations and responsibilities which lead to the fullness of joy and life."[31] He makes a sharp distinction between the Church as a preserver of families, and society as a destroyer of families when he directs his remarks to "those responsible for making and administering laws and public policies," saying that "social problems are never solved, but only worsened, by positions which weaken or destroy the family."[32]

This subtle scolding of the government is immediately followed by a firm denouncement of the racial inequality prevalent in American society:

> Even in this wealthy nation, committed by its founding fathers to the dignity and equality of all persons, the black community suffers a disproportionate share of economic deprivation. Far too many of your young people receive less than an equal opportunity for a quality

> education and for gainful employment. The church must continue to join her efforts with the efforts of others who are working to correct all imbalances and disorders of a social nature. Indeed, the church can never remain silent in the face of injustice wherever it is clearly present.[33]

In this forceful condemnation of American society, the Pope makes the differentiation complete. He states the existence of racism and discrimination in society in emphatic terms, offering a clear contrast with the Church, which he implies to be exemplary of justice and equality. By harshly condemning racism in society, he answers the charges of racism in the Church without ever openly acknowledging that such charges have ever even been leveled.

By strongly identifying himself with his audience and by definitively differentiating the Catholic Church from the evil society which surrounds it, the Pope uses a rhetoric of purification to correct the racist image of the Church held by black Catholics. Within the discourse, John Paul also had a motive of reaffirmation, to bring new life to the image of the Church as a source of spirituality and enlightenment for blacks.

Fisher suggests that a common strategy in a rhetoric of reaffirmation is the use of a life-renewal theme which is often carried out by employing metaphors.[34] Jamieson found five recurrent metaphoric clusters in the rhetoric of Pope Paul VI which appeared to have developed through many centuries of papal rhetoric.[35] The metaphors she identifies are: a body, fertility--sterility, light-

-dark, patrimony--treasure, and water--journey, often suggesting a theme of life renewal.[36] Although John Paul does use several of these metaphors, his use of them seems to be incidental rather than strategic. He uses a life-renewal theme, but makes the theme particularly relevant to his audience by concentrating on a more specific theme of salvation and upliftment which contrasts with the audience's feelings of oppression in society. The theme is directly evident in the language John Paul employs, rather than made manifest through metaphors.

Thirty times the Pope uses words that denote freedom, salvation, liberation, enrichment, encouragement, inspiration, and fulfillment. He speaks of embracing "the saving and uplifting Gospel of Jesus Christ," the "good news of salvation," the "liberating Gospel," "spiritual freedom," and "lofty thoughts."[37] John Paul employs language which connotes all of the positive qualities of the Church that the audience needs to be reassured of. His use of such uplifting language as a strategy of reaffirmation is most apparent when he says, "Know that the pope stands united with the black community as it rises to embrace its full dignity and lofty destiny."[38]

In addition to the linguistic theme of salvation and upliftment, the Pope uses a general strategy of direct reaffirmation by reassuring the audience of the universality of the church. He proclaims that there are no churches of different races or cultures, but that in the one Church, there must be a home for people of all races and cultures. He calls on the definition

of the word catholic to demonstrate the universal character of the Church. Finally, he offers a powerful reaffirmation of the rightful unity of blacks and the Church saying, "Dear brothers and sisters: Your black cultural heritage enriches the church and makes her witness of universality more complete. In a real way the church needs you, just as you need the church, for you are a part of the church and the church is part of you."[39]

The Pope's theme of salvation seemed to hit home with one audience member who said, "It was an uplifting and powerful experience," in an interview following the papal address.[40] The success of the address can only be measured in terms of the response of audience members whose emotions were the target of the discourse, and the emotional response appeared to be overwhelming. One gentleman in attendance reportedly said, "I am not a charismatic, but I have never felt more emotional. I found myself hollering 'Amen!' and that's not me."[41] One woman explained that one passage in the speech brought a sudden feeling of exhilaration to her which was followed by a stream of tears running down her face.[42] The Washington Post reported that joyful responses were shouted out by members of the audience throughout the speech and that the crowd applauded 48 times, "....giving the scene a vibrancy rarely associated with the American Catholic Church and an emotional bond between the pope and his audience otherwise lacking so far during his second tour of the United States."[43]

Response to the substance of the speech is better judged by considering the views of the black bishops who initially expressed

the feelings and concerns that the Pope answered to in his address. Black Catholic leaders in attendance were reportedly moved by both the content and the warmth of the papal address. Bishop Eugene Marino claimed to be delighted by the speech and expressed the concurring opinion of other members of the black Catholic leadership saying, "He spoke to every issue of concern to us. He upheld our cultural diversity and told us to be proud of it. He called for more black leadership. His theme of human dignity is very special to us."[44]

By combining a rhetoric of purification and a rhetoric of reaffirmation, the Pope was able to affect the two divergent images of the Catholic Church held by his audience of black Catholics. He could not rely on a strategy of reaffirmation alone because such a strategy would not have allowed him to address the specific concerns of the black community which had been expressed to him several times before his visit. Nor could he rely solely on a rhetoric of purification, which used alone may have resulted in highly defensive apologetic discourse.

Accepting the possibility of two motives, which appear to be diametrically opposed, existing in a single rhetorical situation, and the potential for accomplishing both motives in a single discourse, allows for more insightful analysis of such discourse. An understanding of not merely multiple motives, but opposing motives, and the strategies used to achieve them, makes what may appear to be a formidable task in speechwriting or analysis, a challenging, but manageable one.

1.Gustave Weigel, S.J., "The Significance of Papal Pronouncements," The Papal Encyclicals in their Historical Context, ed. Anne Fremantle (New York: New American Library, 1956) 9-20.

2.Kenneth L. Woodward, "John Paul: How He's Changing the Church," Newsweek 21 Sept. 1987: 25.

3.Woodward 22-29; Jerry Buckley and Joseph Carey, "A Pilgrim's Progress," U.S. News & World Report 21 Sept. 1987: 58; Richard N. Ostling," 'I Come as a Pilgrim,' " Time 21 Sept. 1987: 60-64.

4.Marshall Ingwerson, "Spirits are High, but Crowds are Small, during Pope's Visit," Christian Science Monitor 14 Sept. 1987: 5.

5.David Maraniss, "Pope 'at home' with Blacks," Washington Post 13 Sept. 1987: A1.

6.Walter R. Fisher, "A Motive View of Communication," Quarterly Journal of Speech 56 (1970): 131-139.

7.Alston Fitts III, "The Black Catholic Community in the United States," Our Sunday Visitor 3 May 1987: 22; Gerard E. Sherry, "Black Catholic Population is Rising Dramatically," Our Sunday Visitor 5 July 1987: 4.

8.Sherry 4; Roberto Suro, "John Paul Assails Economic Plight of Blacks in U.S.," New York Times 13 Sept. 1987, late ed.: A30.

9.'What We Have Seen and Heard': A Pastoral Letter on Evangelization from the Black Bishops of the United States (Cincinnati: St. Anthony Messenger Press, 1984).

10.James C. O'Neill, "Racism is Chief Obstacle in Evangelization of Blacks," Our Sunday Visitor 29 Sept. 1985: 17; Vincent Golphin, "Pastoral Seeks to Draw more Blacks into Church," National Catholic Reporter 20 Sept. 1985: 6.

11."Blacks Proud of their Heritage, their Catholicism," Our Sunday Visitor 7 June 1987: 21; Jim McManus, "Black Catholic Pastoral Plan Solidly Endorsed," National Catholic Reporter 5 June 1987: 1, 8.

12.'What We Have Seen and Heard' 20.

13."Survey Results Released on Black Catholics," Our Sunday Visitor 30 Nov. 1986: 4.

14.Bishop Joseph Howze, "Address to the Pope by a Black Bishop, and John Paul's Reply," New York Times 13 Sept. 1987, late ed.: A32. The Pope had received a copy of the text of Bishop Howze's

address weeks prior to his visit according to Russell Chandler, "Pontiff Deplores Suffering of U.S. Blacks," Los Angeles Times 13 Sept. 1987: I16.

15.Fisher 132.

16.Fisher 131.

17.Fisher 132.

18.Pope John Paul II, "Address to the Pope by a Black Bishop and John Paul's Reply," New York Times 13 Sept. 1987, late ed.: A32.

19.John Paul A32.

20.John Paul A32.

21.John Paul A32.

22.John Paul A32.

23.John Paul A32.

24.John Paul A32.

25.John Paul A32.

26.Suro A30.

27.'What We Have Seen and Heard' 19-25.

28.John Paul A32.

29.John Paul A32.

30.John Paul A32.

31.John Paul A32.

32.John Paul A32.

33.John Paul A32.

34.Fisher 134.

35.Kathleen Hall Jamieson, "The Metaphoric Cluster in the Rhetoric of Pope Paul VI and Edmund G. Brown, Jr.," Quarterly Journal of Speech 66 (1980): 51-72.

36.Jamieson 55.

37.John Paul A32.

38.John Paul A32.

39.John Paul A32.

40.Maraniss A1.

41.Suro A30.

42.Maraniss A1.

43.Maraniss A1.

44.Maraniss A14.